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FOX CONNER

BY

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United States Army

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## ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: William F. Aldrich, COL, USA

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One challenge for senior Army leaders to develop intellectually, a strong core of officers. These future senior leaders will be required to maintain an Army capable of winning on future battlefields. They must do this while in an environment characterized by plummeting resources, greater focus on operations short of war such as humanitarian assistance and counter drug operations, and reduced focus on warfighting. One way to gain meet these challenges is to study a senior Army leader who contributed significantly to the success of the American Expeditionary Forces of World War I and then went on to influence the development of the key Army leaders responsible for the World War II victory. Fox Conner was this leader. Conner graduated from West Point in 1898 and rose through the ranks to become a Major General before his retirement in 1938. Conner was General Pershing's principal operations officer during World War I. He became known as a technically proficient artilleryman and became known as one of the Army's intellectuals. He was one of the Army's most informed senior officers on division organization and force structure. Conner was convinced that the US would be involved in a second world war on the European continent. He selected future leaders of the Army to mentor extensively to ensure they were properly prepared intellectually for the coming hostilities. Conner was an ardent believer that Army leaders should develop their own intellectual curiosity and proficiency in strategy and tactics. He believed military leaders' intellectual development should be heavily steeped in military history to obtain a better perspective and a greater appreciation of strategy on a broad scale.

USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PROGRAM PAPER

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FOX CONNER  
AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT  
by

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United States Army

Colonel Charles E. Heller  
Project Adviser

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U.S. Army War College  
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013

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## INTRODUCTION

The Army now faces the most significant reductions and changes experienced since the interwar period between World War I and World War II. One of the challenges for senior Army leaders of today is to find ways to develop an intellectually strong core of officers who can maintain a strong and healthy Army capable of winning on the future battlefields. They must be accomplish this in an environment characterized by plummeting resources, greater focus on operations short of war such as humanitarian assistance and counter drug operations, and reduced focus on war fighting. Military history can provide experiences and perspectives which will aid us in resolving our challenge. One historical experience to examine for insight to facing our challenge is to look at one senior Army leader who contributed significantly to the success of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) of World War I and how he influenced the development of the leadership responsible for the World War II victory.

Fox Conner was this mentor of the generation of Army officers who won World War II. Conner was a close associate of and senior staff officer for General John J. Pershing, Commander

in Chief, AEF and General Pershing's Chief of Staff after World War I. Conner's views and opinions were sought by many people including General Pershing. Conner was a mentor to several key World War II Army leaders, two of whom were George S. Patton, Jr. and Dwight D. Eisenhower. His key contributions to victory during World War II lay in the educational and intellectual development of Eisenhower and other senior leaders.

Understanding Fox Conner's contribution provides insight to assist our efforts in identifying a way to develop an intellectually strong core of Army leaders to guide the Army through a period of change and develop leaders capable of winning future battles.

Accordingly, this paper examines Fox Conner's Army career from two aspects. First, it presents a brief biography. Second, it identifies Conner's key contributions to Army officers, especially key Army senior leaders responsible for victory in World War II.

#### VALUE OF MILITARY HISTORY

But first, why look at military history for answers to complex problems of today? The answers are numerous. Military history provides a perspective of how the current situation came to pass. It provides experience from the standpoint of what worked, what didn't, and why; it provides a frame of reference on how the current situation developed. Many military leaders from

military history to learn perspectives applicable to modern warfare. Noted 19th century military theorist Jomini said, "Military History, accompanied by sound criticism, is indeed the true school of war."<sup>1</sup> Napoleon declared: "Knowledge of the great principles of warfare can be acquired only through the study of military history. . . . the battles of the Great Captains and through experience."<sup>2</sup> Today's senior leaders have also commented on the importance of studying military history. Former Chief of Staff General Carl E. Vuono's stated:

History sharpens the vision of the skilled commander. By taking in the events and lessons of the past, he can assess his present readiness for war and prepare himself and his subordinates for the challenges of future battles. History puts today's decisions in perspective against those of past commanders. Equally important, it contributes to leader development by narrowing the gap between peacetime and war.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, looking at the U.S. Army in the interwar period from 1920 to 1940 is useful to today's officer corps. The officers of that period went through a significant drawdown and changes after World War I. Still, the Army was able to produce exemplary military leaders that molded the victory of World War II. It is clear that intellectual curiosity of professionals often indicates the health of their professional development. Major General Gerald P. Stadler, in 1990, focused on the key contributions of a number of professional Army officers during the interwar period:

One of the most important developments that emerged within the Army's officer corps of the 1920s and the 1930s was the study habit, although only a few officers acquired it. This habit was not merely a study of war or battles or past leaders--it encompasses those, of



course, but also much more. It included an understanding that history is a bridge toward a grasp of strategy.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, true military professionals are those officers who through dedicated effort over a professional lifetime, among other things, demonstrate intellectual curiosity. These individuals study the profession of arms to become not only technically proficient but also to develop their strategic thought process. This study requires dedicated effort over a professional lifetime. An officer who demonstrated such a propensity to study the profession of arms was Fox Conner.

#### THE EARLY YEARS

Fox Conner was born at Slate Spring, Calhoun County, Mississippi, on November 15, 1874. On June 15, 1894, after spending the first 20 years of his life being raised in Calhoun County, Mississippi, he was appointed to the United States Military Academy. Conner graduated on April 26, 1898, and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant of Artillery, 2nd Artillery. He was ranked 17 out of a graduating class of 59.<sup>5</sup> Becoming a field artillery officer was a disappointment to Fox Conner. His first choice was cavalry. However, his class standing was not high enough.<sup>6</sup> Conner persisted and sought a transfer to the cavalry after graduation without success.

The Army Fox Conner joined was small and of questionable fighting capability. At the beginning of 1898, the authorized

strength of the Army was only 27, 822.<sup>7</sup> Officer authorizations totaled 2,116 with 280 artillery officers authorized in five regiments. In the previous thirty years, Congress had neglected the country's land forces. Congress either ignored the Army or focused on paring or cutting it.<sup>8</sup> The Army was ill-equipped and poorly organized in small detachments located all over the country. In the 10-15 years prior to 1898 the primary focus of the Army had been directed toward domestic security.

Between 1886 and 1895 soldiers were used 328 times to quell civil labor disturbances arising in 49 states and territories. As late as 1895, Army personnel were still being called out to enforce peace with Indians. In 1895, the Governor of Wyoming and the Indian agent in Fort Hall, Idaho, asked for troops as a result of the "threatening attitude" of indigenous Indians towards settlers in the area.<sup>9</sup> However, 1898 would become the start of a renaissance for the Army. Included in this renaissance was Fox Conner's arrival on active duty.

Fox Conner's initial assignments were brief tours of duty served with a battery at Fort Adams, Rhode Island, from May 26, 1898 to October 1898; at Huntsville, Alabama, from October 1, 1898 until November 30, 1898; and, at Savannah, Georgia, from December 1, 1898, until January 1899.<sup>10</sup> On January 21, 1899 he boarded a ship destined for his first overseas tour, Havana, Cuba, where he was on duty until August 1900. During this tour with the occupation forces, he was stationed at Camp Columbia, in Havana. While there, he passed his first promotion examination.

The promotion board, however, indicated that there was "considerable room for increased technical knowledge of artillery and military engineering."<sup>11</sup> During his tour in Cuba, Conner gained administrative skill and some fluency with Spanish. After returning to the United States, he served with the artillery unit at Washington Barracks, D.C.

In June 1901, while at Washington Barracks, Conner appeared before his next promotion board. "By this time, Conner had become a serious soldier and a technically proficient artillerist."<sup>12</sup> He had shown significant improvement in his technical expertise. As an example, he submitted a design improvement for the elevating hand wheels of mortar carriages. His superiors identified his potential for assignment to the bureaus of the War Department and his capability as an officer of the line. Subsequently, he was assigned to Fort Myer, Virginia. After a short period in November 1901, he was assigned to Fort Hamilton, New York as commander of the 123rd Company, Coast Artillery.<sup>13</sup>

#### LEAVENWORTH AND BEYOND

In 1904, he attended Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. By the time Conner arrived at Staff College, he had diligently developed language proficiency in French in addition to Spanish. Because of his demonstrated proficiency in tactics Conner was allowed to skip the first year of schooling at the

General Service School and enroll directly in the Staff College. The school was available by either correspondence or in residence. Either way, one shortcoming plagued every class. Students had no real military maps of any part of North America. As a result, the students were required to use German maps of the Franco-German frontier in the area around Metz. Conner was one of a number of students who protested using European maps, believing that maps of Canada or Mexico would have been more meaningful.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, Conner clearly demonstrated excellence in academic activities. As a result, the Staff College recommended him for a faculty position at Leavenworth, West Point, or the Army War College. Conner was also considered suitable for staff positions.<sup>15</sup>

In 1905, Conner graduated from the Staff College at Leavenworth and he received one of those staff positions as Adjutant, Artillery subpost, Fort Riley, Kansas. Conner's responsibilities included artillery training. In May, 1907, he was assigned to the Special General Staff at Fort Riley. There, he impressed his superiors so much that he was recommended for assignment to the new Army General Staff in Washington, D.C.

In the fall of 1907 Conner went to Washington initially as a student at the Army War College. In 1907 the idea that officers could be taught leadership and command in peacetime so that they would be more effective in war was a relatively recent innovation. The method to accomplish this at the Army War College then was called "Applicatory system of instruction."<sup>16</sup>

It focused on teaching the principles of war by studying their application "rather than by the abstract study of the principles themselves."<sup>17</sup> Campaigns were studied first with their strategy identified second. One of the focuses of this effort was on map problems. An extension of the map problem included what was referred to as the Map Maneuver, or the Keigespiel of the Germans.<sup>18</sup> This was simply depicted the operations of war by representing the movements of troops over the surface of the map. Additionally, Staff Rides were used extensively. The study of military history in the curriculum in 1907 was relatively new. One of the perceived benefits of military history identified by the senior Army instructor was as follows: "The causes of the triumphs and disasters of the past form a class of study which will best lead us to an appreciation of the meaning of strategy."<sup>19</sup>

In 1908, Fox Conner graduated and then reported for duty on the Army General Staff. His duties included teaching at the War College. In the fall of 1908, Conner was one of five Army officers (one Major and five Captains) on the War College<sup>20</sup> faculty. The course was changed in the fall of 1908 compared to previous classes because the 1908-1909 student body was the first one to have students who had graduated from the School of the Line and the Staff College at Fort Leavenworth.<sup>21</sup>

The scope of the program of instruction for the new class commencing in 1908 is impressive even today. Tactics was studied in the form of map exercises; conferences at which papers were

presented and discussed; tactical exercises were transferred to terrain in the form of staff rides. Additionally, strategic perspectives were studied:

" . . . involving the operations of the larger units, the object being to introduce the usual features of combined operations with the consequent modifications in logistics; naval cooperation exercises which will involve combined operations between the Army and the Navy as would occur in joint expeditions. . . ." <sup>22</sup>

Further, each student was assigned a special topic of military importance. Civil War battles were a popular choice for this project known more recently as the Military Studies Program. Finally, the last two months of the course were "devoted to study on the ground of some of the great campaigns of the Civil War." <sup>23</sup>

The breadth of knowledge by War College faculty of other countries doctrine is most impressive. At one point in the 1908-1909 class the student body had a discussion on initiative. Fox Conner corrected the students perception that the doctrine of initiative was unique to German doctrine. In fact, he quoted to the students the doctrine from four other countries who also included initiative as an important part of their doctrine at that time: Italy, Austria, Japan, and Argentina. <sup>24</sup>

In addition, he served in the 3rd Division of the Staff's doctrine department, with responsibility for artillery doctrine. Conner "detested" having to work with contemporaries and superiors alike who were his War College students. <sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, his flair for staff research continued to impress his superiors. Conner, also, excelled in tactical problems and staff rides participating in numerous staff rides in

Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. In 1911, he assisted in revising the Field Artillery Regulations. For his own professional development, Conner used this assignment to study not only French, which he already had some proficiency in, but also a third language, German.<sup>26</sup>

During this time Conner also became involved in the preparedness movement and was one of a handful of officers on the staff who examined the history of preparedness of the United States. In a series of letters on this subject, Conner concluded that Congress should be held accountable for taking "the reasonable and necessary measures to fulfill the duties imposed on it by the Constitution."<sup>27</sup> "Such a statement served as the perfect introduction to the General Staff's 1912 proposal for the Land Organization of the United States."<sup>28</sup>

As Conner's tour in Washington came to a close, he was offered several alternative positions for his next assignment. He was considered for the position of military attache for either Turkey or Mexico, but neither assignment appealed to him. He was offered an assignment to West Point to command the battery there and this assignment had appeal to Conner. Conner was persuaded to try something completely different. General Wotherspoon, the head of the Army War College then, recommended that Conner should take a new opportunity for a one year assignment to a French regiment. This was to be followed by a two year assignment at a new French War College, L'Ecole de Guerre.<sup>29</sup>

In 1912, Fox Conner was selected as the first American

liaison officer to be assigned to a French Regiment. And so, Conner departed on his second overseas tour. In France, he served with the 22nd Regiment, Field Artillery, French Army, until October 1912. After Conner's tour with the 22nd was complete he was ordered home prior to going to Paris to attend the French War College. Conner's tour was terminated early due to the passage of the "Manchu Act" in 1912. The Manchu law required that an officer must spend two out of every six years with troops. Conner had been away from troops for five years, so he was "Manchued" home.<sup>30</sup>

Upon his return home to the United States he was assigned in Washington for duty with the Field Artillery Board. In early 1913, Conner was assigned to Fort Riley, again, where he took command of a battery of the 6th Field Artillery.<sup>31</sup>

In 1914, Conner's regiment moved to Laredo, Texas. During the next two years Conner was constantly on the move because of his demonstrated competence as a Field Artillery officer. He ranged from the School of Fire at Fort Sill, to Washington and duty with the Artillery Board, and back again to Fort Sill. Conner was scheduled to return to France in November 1915, but an attack of appendicitis prevented that move. He was assigned back to Washington in 1916 where he worked in the Inspector General's Office until May, 1917.<sup>32</sup>

"LAFAYETTE, WE ARE HERE"



After being named as Commander of the AEF, General Pershing was allowed to name a relatively small number of experienced staff officers to accompany him to France. In May 1917, Major Fox Conner sailed to France on the "Baltic" as part of General Pershing's original staff serving as an Assistant Inspector General. Fox Conner was one of several officers to accompany Pershing from the Inspector General's office in Washington. While on the ship Conner ran into another officer who would have a profound affect on his career: Maj John M. Palmer.

Palmer was going to France as the Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations, AEF. Fox Conner served with Palmer at the War College when Palmer was there in 1911-12. Due to the scope of the task before the AEF, Palmer was convinced that the Operations Section needed the best officers that could be found. For Palmer that meant Fox Conner. While on the "Baltic," Palmer successfully sought to have Conner assigned to the Operations Section. The fascinating aspect of this is that Palmer wanted Conner even though he was senior to Palmer and Palmer could have been displaced as the Operation Section Chief if Conner was promoted first. Palmer later said that Conner " . . . soon proved his worth many times over in the Operations Section." <sup>33</sup>

While in France, Conner served as Assistant Operations Officer, G-3; next as Deputy G-3, then as the G-3; and, finally, as General Pershing's Chief of Staff, American Expeditionary Forces.<sup>34</sup> Conner and the other Americans who went to France,

initially, found that they had much to learn about war on this scale.

The Americans joined the war after it had been going on for some time. As a result, the AEF immediately was thrust into a situation for which it was ill-prepared, and the staff realized they would have to re-evaluate the way it was organized and deployed. For example, World War I was coalition warfare, and America's last coalition warfare experience had been the Revolutionary War. Also, General Pershing found that some American practices needed to be changed based on the AEF's experience and analysis, and advice of allies. The American practice was to divide the General Staff only into three components: administration, intelligence, and operations. The European theater required a General Staff divided into five components: G-1, administrative policy; G-2, Intelligence; G-3, operations; G-4, Training; G-5, Coordination.

Consequently, General Pershing constantly pushed the idea of taking worthwhile concepts from the Allied methods and merging them with U.S. Army's method.<sup>35</sup> Most of the senior staff officers were graduates of Leavenworth, and "they showed common passion for precision planning, clear orders, simple movements, care for troops."<sup>36</sup> All through most of this time Conner was the principal adviser to Pershing for all combat operations dealing with movement and operations of combat forces. Frank Vandiver sums up the prevailing view of Conner's performance as the main

operations officers when he said ". . . the genius of operations was Fox Conner at HAEF."<sup>37</sup>

Even though he was a staff officer at GHQ, AEF, Conner believed it important that he keep personally aware of what was going on at the front. As a consequence, he would visit the front lines periodically. On one of these occasions Conner came under enemy fire. "While making an inspection of front line units near Seichprey on February 9, 1918, General Conner was wounded by fragments of a bursting shell."<sup>38</sup> The resulting injuries involved the his nose and neck. They apparently bled profusely but were not life threatening.<sup>39</sup>

Fox Conner was appointed to temporary Brigadier General, National Army, on August 8, 1918, and reverted to the grade of Colonel, Field Artillery, on August 22, 1919.<sup>40</sup> General Conner received the Distinguished Service Medal for his service in France during World War I. The citation is as follows:

For exceptionally meritorious and distinguished services. As Assistant Chief of Staff in charge of the Operations Section, he has shown a masterful conception of the tactical situations which have confronted the American Forces in Europe. By his high professional attainments and sound military judgment, he has handled with marked skill the many details of the complex problems of organization and troop movements that were necessitated by the various operations of the American Expeditionary Forces.<sup>41</sup>

General Conner received awards from Allied governments including the Commander of the French Legion of Honor, the Italian Order of the Crown, the Belgian Order of the Crown; Companion of the British Order of the Bath; the French Croix de Guerre, and Panamanian Order of La Solidaridad.<sup>42</sup>

On September 8, 1919, Conner returned to the United States and continued to serve as Chief of Staff at AEF, Washington, D.C., until August 31, 1920. While there, he was a member of the War Department Board (known as the Harbord Board) recommending the prototype for the division structure used between the interwar period.<sup>43</sup> During this period Conner drafted the AEF after-action report. In this document Conner discussed the future structure of the Army and its divisions. Conner's arguments were "so consistent with Pershing's own views that Pershing used them verbatim as his recommendation to the secretary of war on the National Defense Act of 1920."<sup>44</sup> In October 1920 Conner was sent to Headquarters, Second Corps Area, Governors Island, New York, until November 23, 1921. During this period on April 27, 1921, Conner was appointed Brigadier General, Regular Army.<sup>45</sup>

#### POST WORLD WAR I

Fox Conner was one of General Pershing's men. When Pershing retired, Conner was reassigned out of Washington to Panama, where he commanded the 20th Infantry Brigade, located at Camp Gaillard until 1924. In December 1924 he was appointed the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-4 (Supply Division). Where, on October 20, 1925, Conner was promoted to the rank of Major General. The following year on March 6, 1926, he was appointed Deputy Chief of Staff. On 1 May 1927, Major General Conner assumed command of

the First Division, headquartered at Fort Hamilton, New York. Following this assignment, Major General Conner commanded the Hawaiian Department on January 25, 1928. Finally, on October 7, 1930, he became the commander of the First Corps Area in Boston, Massachusetts and remained there until he retired.<sup>46</sup>

Major General Fox Conner retired from the Army in 1938 with 40 years of service. In 1938, General Pershing summed up his assessment of Conner's contribution to the AEF's effort in World War I by telling Conner, "I could have spared any other man in the A.E.F. better than you."<sup>47</sup> Fox Conner retired to Washington, D.C. primarily so he would be close to Walter Reed Army Medical Center. He died in Washington, D.C., on October 13, 1951 at the age of 76.

#### CONTRIBUTIONS

Fox Conner was an exemplary soldier in many ways. He was a dedicated professional who became known for his technical proficiency. Conner was the premier operations officer of World War I. More specifically, Conner was the driving force behind the planning for the two major operations of the American forces. These were the St Mihiel and the Meuse-Argonne operations. The significance of planning and executing these two operations is overwhelming in scope. Brigadier General Hugh Drum documented in his report as Chief of Staff, First American Army, the magnitude of the American fighting forces in France by the end of the war.

With few exceptions all American combat divisions and Corps and Army troops sent to France became part of the First American Army and fought under its control either in the St Mihiel or Meuse-Argonne operation (A total of 7 corps and 28 divisions fought in the First Army.)

During the Meuse-Argonne operation, the First American Army reached the following strength: American 896,000, French 135,000, or a grand total of 1,031,000.

The First Army was the largest single Army America has ever organized and fought. Grant's Army in 1864 totaled about 120,000. Sherman's Army in the same year totaled about 80,000. Lee's Army in 1864 was approximately 70,000. In fact, this First American Army, which carried out so successfully the two major operations mentioned above, was the largest single Army on the Western Front.<sup>48</sup>

Further, Conner was one of the acknowledged experts in division force structure. Also, he was a great student of military history, particularly from a strategic view. He was a great student of other cultures through the study of languages. Through his own initiative, he developed fluency in three languages: Spanish, German, and French. He was a leader concerned with preparedness and mobilization, the organization of the Army, and the intellectual development of the officer corps. Conner became known as one of the Army's "brains" due to his farsightedness, analytical perceptiveness, and meticulous attention to detail. And, Conner was adept at identifying those he believed had potential to become future senior leaders and mentored them.

## EDUCATING FUTURE LEADERS

Fox Conner demonstrated a long standing interest in educating future Army senior leaders. This was exhibited in a variety of ways. One of these was to lecture at the Army's senior service school. Conner was a guest lecturer at the U.S. Army War College on three occasions in 1920, 1921, 1925 four different times, 1931, 1933, 1935, 1936 three different times, 1937, and finally in his 40th year in the Army in 1938, a total of 15 times. Topics for these lectures ranged from "Replacements" to "Relations Between the War Department and the Forces in the Field", to "Supply at G.H.Q., A.E.F", to "G-3 G.H.Q. A.E.F., and its Major Problems to Allied High Command and Allied Unity of Direction." Copies of many of these detailed lectures to include verbatim transcripts of the question and answer sessions are on file in the Military History at Carlisle Barracks. Many of Conner's belief are still surprisingly relevant. Conner concluded his lecture on "G-3, AEF and Its Major Problems" to the class of 1933 with his list of major lessons of the war.

- a. Most of the so-called lessons of the war assume that experiences rather than the deductions which may be drawn from them are the lessons we seek.
- b. The tail-end of a war is very unlike the beginning and we may not always be lucky enough to be tail-enders.
- c. Our present Division is ill-suited to the next war.
- d. Any nation which maintains its peace strength as complete Divisions, each at war strength in every detail, will start its next war with an advantage

which mere numbers will find it difficult to overcome.

e. Unless a radical increase has been made during the last year our provision for replacements is totally inadequate.

f. The only really vital question in tactics and armament is overcoming the hostile machine guns.

g. We knew that Napoleon said that he conquered Europe on bits of ribbons. But we thought that this applied to Frenchman. We did not realize that Americans are crazier than any other people on Earth about "bits of ribbon."

h. Decorations should be numerous both in kind and in quantity. They should be bestowed not because some one worked himself to death or nearly got killed but primarily to induce him and some one else to go out and get killed again.

i. You need very few Napoleon Bonapartes in war but you need a lot of superb G-4's and above all you need good company and battalion commanders.

j. Your best information about the enemy comes after the war is over, but you can always rely on it that he is worse off than you think he is and that the surest way to avoid being surprised at the location of his attack is to attack him first.

k. The time required to transmit long orders is appalling. As a result in a great war most battalions jump off on verbal orders and about all they know is the time and the direction of the attack; perhaps that is all they need to know.

l. War is essentially friction and change. The only way of avoiding changes in a plan is to stay at home.

m. The demonstration of how scientifically the plans adopted conform to the principles of war and to the teachings of great masters of war finds its place after the war is over. The best explanation of why this or that was done because it was in conformity with Principle 8 or 9 is usually made by one who had nothing to do with the plan while the battle was on. Though you violate all the so-called principles, the commentators will create a new one to justify you, if you win. If you lose, you are damned any way, so why worry?



n. The most valuable qualification in an officer is common-sense; contrary to general belief, it is the rarest element found in mankind."

In Conner's lecture entitled "The Allied High Command and Allied Unity of Direction" he provides a detailed view of coalition warfare from the World War I perspective. This lecture was given to the War College students of 1934, and also continues to have some relevance. Conner's lessons from "Unity of Direction and Unity of Command" in the World War were summed up as follows:

1. National Pride plays some, though a small, part in preventing or postponing Unity of Direction and Unity of Command.
2. The ulterior motives of the several members of a Coalition form the principle obstacle to securing either Unity of Direction or Unity of Command.
3. With the exception of America and possibly Belgium, all Nations, or rather the Politicians of all Nations, in the World War were filled with ulterior motives, and with grandiose ideas of the "Compensations" they would obtain at the peace table. It is likely to be so again.
4. With the exceptions noted, all Nations were "jockeying" for post war "positions."
5. "Open Covenants, openly arrived at" is beyond the realities of European statesmanship or politics. One is constantly reminded of Captain Peter Wright's tribute to the Americans at the Supreme War Council: - "They were all quite untouched by the taint of bad faith and personal calculations that seems to load the air where the great are."
6. As between Allies so opposed in racial characteristics, as well as National interests, as the British, the French, the Italians, and Americans, only an actual or a threatened catastrophe is likely to bring about anything approaching either Unity of Direction or Unity of Command.
7. In spite of the assertion just made, America should,

if she ever indulges in the doubtful luxury of entering another Coalition, advocate, coincident with entering a war with Allies, the establishment of a Supreme War Council. Such an institution is primarily necessary to provide decent interment for "Fool Schemes."

8. Unity of Command should be sought, at least between Allies of equal standing, in matters of strategy only. It is quite hopeless to expect a worth-while Nation, unless it reaches the state of Austria in 1916 and 1917, to surrender the tactical command of its troops.

9. With a President like Mr. Wilson and a Great Secretary like Mr. Baker, the United States is well organized politically to carry on a great war.

10. When General Pershing left Washington to go to France, Secretary Baker said to him: - "I will not interfere with your administration of military questions or permit them to be interfered with by my military associates on this side." General Pershing has borne testimony that Secretary Baker carried out this assurance to the letter. No other Commander-in-Chief had such support.

11. Cato the Elder ended, whether pertinently or not, every speech with - "Carthage must be destroyed." Taking an equal liberty, I close this talk with the assertion: - Our Division should be completely reorganized.<sup>50</sup>

#### WRITTEN CONTRIBUTIONS

Thoughtful published works can increase the corporate expertise of any profession. Good writing for publication requires critical thinking on what is presented and how it is presented. It offers the opportunity for the author to contribute to a profession's corporate knowledge for the immediate, intended audience and also for historical continuity. Visionary leaders provide the next generation of leaders with the benefits of their experience and perspectives through writing. Fox Conner strived to enhance the Army's corporate expertise and

to educate the officer corps through a variety of written works.

In 1933, Conner published an article titled "Divisional Organization" in the May-June issue of Coast Artillery.<sup>51</sup> In this article, he articulated how he favored the so-called small division; one organized differently than the one used for AEF. A fair amount of space is dedicated to background on how the divisional structure was developed for AEF.

Visionary leaders use their experience and perspectives to analyze professional literature. This serves to validate insightful works or challenge works with questionable potential. The value of this was articulated in 1936 by that British military historian J.F.C. Fuller when he said " . . . It is only through the free criticism of each other's ideas that truth can be thrashed out."<sup>52</sup> This another way visionary leaders contribute to corporate expertise and education of future leaders. Fox Conner demonstrated this when he analyzed a book written by General Peyton March called The Nation At War and published this critique in a 1934 issue of the ARMY ORDNANCE.<sup>53</sup>

Conner's analysis determined that there were errors in fact in March's book. More specifically, Conner took issue with some of March's facts on development of the division for the AEF. Conner's study of preparedness while on the Army Staff prior to World War I and his role as the principal operations officer for the AEF made him one of the Army's foremost experts on division force structure for that period. As a result, his analysis of March's book pertaining to AEF divisional force structure issues

would be examined closely by many professionals in the Army. Conner challenged a number of March's statements.

For example, March's book claimed that French Marshal Joffre recommended that the American divisions should be organized on the basis of 12,000 combatants per division. Conner did not accept this as correct. March, also, indicated that there were 50 American and 100 English divisions in France. Conner said in his critique that both numbers were incorrect and were overstated. Conner, also, indicated that there was vigorous debate in the United States Army on the proper configuration for the AEF division. The only point on which there was general consensus dealt with how many regiments were too many for the division. Most of the War College officers thought that nine regiments to the division made an unwieldy organization.

Conner's critique indicated that there was a great deal of British and French advice for the United States in 1917 on the proper organization for our divisions destined for Europe. Both Britain and France agreed that a nine regiment, 27 battalion division, was too large and unwieldy. France favored a division of three or four regiments of infantry with each regiment having three battalions.

France's specific recommendations were provided, per Conner, in a memorandum from Marshal Joffre to Secretary of State Baker on May 14, 1917. Marshall Joffre recommended a division composed of 16,000 to 20,000 combatants containing four regiments, 12 light batteries, 6 heavy batteries, and necessary services.

Joffre, also, envisioned an Army Corps with two divisions each with a reserve brigade of infantry.

Conner indicated that the War College recommended, on May 21, 1917, a division composed of 18,992 with two brigades of infantry, each with two regiments of three battalions. The War Department ultimately made a few minor additions generating a division strength of 19,492 infantry. This division structure was worked out in conference between the War College Division of the General Staff and the French Mission.

In time, General Pershing supported this organization and the War Department approved it. It is interesting to note that heavy reliance was made on input from both the British and the French General Headquarters. When AEF personnel visited the British G.H.Q. they found strong support from the British for a 12 battalion division. However, the British War Department had, "on account of the crisis in man power," suggested reducing the number of battalions down to nine. This was a position the British G.H.Q. did not agree with. Conner also commented on the requirements for artillery. Since the main characteristics of the war when the Americans entered it was siege oriented, there was general agreement between Allied and American leadership that the artillery component of the AEF division should contain a brigade of three regiments of six four-gun batteries each.

All totaled, the division adopted by the War Department called for 27,123 soldiers. Conner pointed out that after the armistice, General Pershing convened a board known as the

Superior Board commissioned to consider the lessons learned from the war and make appropriate recommendations on division structure. This board, composed of Generals Dickman, J.L. Hines, Lassiter, Drum, and Burt, recommended essentially the same division structure totaling 29,199 in strength. On June 8, 1920, a War Department board, including Conner reviewed the recommendations.

Conner, Chief of Staff for Pershing at the AEF headquarters, supported the report, something he later regretted. The board recommended a division similar to the AEF division with 19,217 officers and men. Even though General Pershing forwarded it to the Secretary of War in June, 1920, he indicated that the board's recommendation were swayed by the specialized warfare in Western Europe. General Pershing recommended a division of 16,875 officers and men. Conner lamented the fact that the post-World War I division had grown to 22,068 officers and men requiring "a road space of 63,080 yards, or 35.8 miles." However, Conner finished the article indicating he thought the AEF division was the best that could have been developed at that time.

In a later article published in the May-June, 1934, issue of Army Ordnance, Conner reviewed General Peyton March's book entitled The Nation at War. The focus of Conner's article is to refute March's criticism that General Pershing was profoundly ignorant of French military policy. In this rather detailed article, Conner comes to Pershing's aid in reviewing AEF actions and French military policy going back to 1866.

True professionals contribute to their profession over a lifetime of dedicated effort - even after they retire. After Fox Conner retired from the Army in 1938, he continued to contribute to the written literature of the Army. Picking up on a theme he had presented to War College classes, Conner published an article in the May, 1941 issue of the Infantry Journal. This article, titled "Replacements: Life Blood of a Fighting Army,"<sup>54</sup> reviewed the World War I experience for replacement needs. Conner wanted to ensure that the importance of replacements would not be lost in the rush of preparation for the coming war. Conner's premise was that without adequate replacements an army melts away to an inefficient skeleton. Conner said that 25% of mobilized strength would be used up as replacements before the first battle loss occurred. The AEF experience was that between 10% to 20% overhead needed to be allowed, at a minimum, to ensure effective replacement streams.

#### MENTORING

All true professionals and visionary leaders demonstrate concern for the future of their organizations and the country. Actively participating in the selection of future leaders or their training is one way to accomplish. One of Fox Conner's most important contributions to the Army was to identify the best possible future leaders and aid in their development. He excelled at mentoring. Conner had a knack for identifying officers who would become significant leaders in the Army. One of these future leaders was George S. Patton, Jr.

In 1905, Fox Conner met George Patton on a train from Kansas City enroute to Fort Riley. Fox Conner became a friend of and mentor to George S. Patton, Jr. The two got along so well that both family's became lifelong friends.<sup>55</sup> A particularly important assignment for both officers was their tour in France with the AEF.

George Patton went to France originally in the "attached" category. This basically meant that he didn't have a specific assignment prior to departing the US, but was desired as part of the Pershing team. Patton's initial duty in France was, essentially, to serve as commander of the headquarters troops responsible for troops working in the various AEF GHQ staff sections. His major responsibilities involved the guards, chauffeurs, and mechanics.<sup>56</sup> Historian Martin Blumenson points out quite clearly in his book The Patton Papers, 1885-1940 that Patton came to model his demeanor after General Pershing's.<sup>57</sup> However, other officers around Pershing--Hines, Fox Conner, James G. Harbord, Hugh A. Drum, Malin Craig, and Summerall-- contributed significantly to Patton's professional growth and mastery of the complex art of war.<sup>58</sup> Conner contributed to Patton's professional development during his AEF tour, during Patton's time later at Camp Meade, and still later when Conner commanded the Hawaiian Department. Conner and Patton corresponded for more than 20 years. During the interwar period Conner was convinced that we would be involved in another war in Europe. Interestingly, it was Fox Conner who introduced Patton to the



possibilities of using tanks for a decisive advantage. Patton related the story as follows:

One hot July in day in 1917 I was drowsing over the desk of the Concierge at GHQ[General Headquarters] in Paris . . . Suddenly my slumbers were disturbed by an orderly who told me to report to the Operations Officer. There a certain Major . . .[Fox Conner] introduced me to a French Officer and directed me to listen to his story and report my conclusions. This Frenchman was a Tank enthusiast who regaled me for several hours with lurid tales of the value of his pet hobby as a certain means of winning the war. In the report I submitted . . . I said, couching my remarks in the euphemistic jargon appropriate to official correspondence, that the Frenchman was crazy and the Tank not worth a damn.<sup>59</sup>

However, after carefully considering the potential benefits that might be possible with tanks Patton quickly became an enthusiastic supporter of the new tank concept. In fact, the tank was one of the major issues that Patton talked over with Conner when they shared a hospital room in October 1917. Patton was recovering from "jaundice catarrhal."<sup>60</sup> Conner was recovering from surgery for an intestinal blockage. These discussions appear to have contributed to General Pershing's decision to select Patton to start an American Tank school in France. Conner discussed with Patton on the potential benefits and future of tanks and whether it would be worthwhile to seek duty with tank units. Conner continued to assist Patton in many ways. Conner provided his own gold oak leaves for Patton's promotion to major. Also, Conner was responsible for getting the land Patton needed to set up the Tank School in France. After World War I George Patton was assigned to Camp Meade, Maryland.

While George Patton was at Camp Meade he introduced General Conner to a friend named Dwight D. Eisenhower. The Patton's had Conner and the Eisenhowers over for Sunday dinner.<sup>61</sup> After dinner, the men had a lengthy discussion on military tactics, including the use of tanks. Eisenhower and Patton believed that "by using terrain properly, tanks could break into enemy defenses, create confusion, and exploit the advantage by envelopment." This concept was controversial because the tank was then considered an infantry support weapon and was not to operate independently. Patton and Eisenhower both published articles on their beliefs. Eisenhower had his published in the November 1920 issue of the Infantry Journal. The chief of infantry, at that time, threatened to court-martial Eisenhower if he did not keep his ideas to himself.<sup>62</sup> However, Eisenhower found support and interest in his ideas from General Fox Conner.

Conner was impressed by Eisenhower and his forward thinking. Eisenhower had tried to obtain reassignment from Camp Meade but had become mired in an investigation associated with charges with "offenses of the gravest character for which he might not only be dismissed from the service but imprisoned."<sup>63</sup> The charges related to a \$250.67 claim made by Eisenhower for the support of his son during a period of several months in which the boy lived with a relative in Iowa. Ike had raised the issue himself after another officer had been prosecuted for a similar situation. The Acting Inspector General of the Army, Brigadier General Eli

Helmick, had been pursuing the investigation for about six months.

After General Pershing replaced Peyton March as Army Chief of Staff, Conner appealed to Pershing to support Eisenhower's reassignment to Conner's command in Panama. Due to General Pershing's involvement, Brigadier General Hemlick had a change in heart and did not block this request. The investigation against Eisenhower terminated with a mild letter of reprimand rather than a earlier threatened court-martial.<sup>64</sup> Once again the behind the scenes hand of Fox Conner were felt. Eisenhower received orders to Panama by January 1922. As a result, Conner set in motion a mentoring relationship that had a profound effect on the events in World War II.

Eisenhower's assignment as Conner's brigade executive officer at Camp Gaillard in Panama began a significant transition in Eisenhower's professional education. The brigade's mission was to reorganize and modernize the defense of the Canal Zone.<sup>65</sup> Brigadier General Fox Conner was diligent in pursuit of this mission. Conner was a stern officer, in the Pershing mold, who demanded loyalty and dedication of his subordinates for his centralized planning and training policies.<sup>66</sup> Eisenhower was frequently the enforcer of Conner's policies. Eisenhower's professional development began immediately upon his arrival to Panama. Eisenhower was "required to submit a daily five-paragraph field order, an exacting task that involved analysis of mission, training, and logistics."<sup>67</sup>

Conner believed there would be another major European war and he urged Eisenhower to be ready for it. Conner thought that the failure of the U.S. to join the League of Nations and the strictness of the Treaty of Versailles ensured a major conflict in Europe.

In terms of preparation, Conner was a strong believer in proper intellectual development for military leaders. Conner was a graduate of the Staff College at Leavenworth and encouraged Eisenhower to prepare for his own attendance. Conner developed for Eisenhower a concentrated program designed to provide a strong historical perspective to Eisenhower's technical competence. Further, Conner developed a strategic focus in Eisenhower that would be a significant factor in World War II.

Conner shaped Ike's assignment into an intellectual proving ground for the future. This began with the rekindling of Ike's interest in military history--a love forsaken as a result of the tedious memorization requirements at West Point. The Conner library became an inspiring place for Ike.<sup>68</sup>

Conner directed an extensive reading program for Eisenhower. This reading program included such books as The Long Roll by Mary Johnston, The Exploits of Brigadier Gerard in the Napoleonic Wars, The Crisis by Winston Churchill (not the same wartime leader), and On War by Clausewitz. Ike was, also, encouraged to read the works of Jomini and Mahan. Additional emphasis was placed on studying the American Revolution and the Civil War. "Ike would describe his tutelage as "a sort of graduate school in military affairs and the humanities, leavened by the comments and discourses of a man who was experienced in his knowledge of

men and their conduct."<sup>69</sup> Conner grilled his young protege on aspects of perspective and strategy based on his own experience and education and from extensive reading in military history. Conner contributed to the intellectual development of Eisenhower and sharpened his analytical skills in strategic thought. The two developed a strong professional bond that lasted a lifetime.

Subsequently, Eisenhower's attendance at the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth was due only to the efforts of Fox Conner.<sup>70</sup> Conner was also responsible for Eisenhower's assignment to Washington after Leavenworth.<sup>71</sup> As an example, almost 20 years after their tour together in Panama Fox Conner was writing Eisenhower, in 1942, with advice for a cross channel landing. Advice which Eisenhower accepted and supported.<sup>72</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

Conner demonstrated a life-long intellectual curiosity. Today, much can still be learned from Conner's work. His emphasis of dedicated study to develop individual professionalism is every bit as appropriate today as it was in the interwar period. He believed that a military leader's intellectual development should be heavily steeped in military history to obtain a better historical perspective and a greater appreciation of strategy on the broadest scale. The emphasis on studying military history as a means, or bridge, to strategic thought is still significant. Some of Conner's comments on coalition

warfare are timeless. One of Conner's timeless observations of World War I was that "War is essentially friction and change. The only way of avoiding changes in a plan is to stay at home." And, finally, Conner demonstrated concern for the future of the country as he tirelessly devoted himself to identifying and educating future leaders of the Army.

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